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The Path to Rebellion, Part 8

The Horrifying Consequence of Sin

Many have heard of Giovanni Casanova. This is amazing! This man was born and raised in the eighteenth century and many of you have heard of him three hundred years after the fact!

And the reason most of us have heard of him isn't because

- He came up with some great invention.
- He found the cure to a horrible disease.
- He made such great advances in the field of science.

NO! The reason we have heard of him on account of his sin!

Casanova was born in Venice on April 5, 1725. He was reared by his actress-mother, Zanetta. He never met his father. And given the age in which he lived and the circumstances surrounding his life, he went on to become one of the most notorious philanderers the world has ever known.

Today, Casanova's life is glamorized and idolized in movies, on stage, and in writing. A "Casanova" refers to someone who is suave and debonair, a lady's man. And yet, few realize the horrible consequences of his recklessly promiscuous life. Before the age of 40 he suffered no less than eleven

bouts of syphilis and gonorrhea. It wasn't long after his 40th birthday that his kidneys began to fail. And eventually he died a slow and miserable death.

In light of this, it is my opinion that Giovanni Casanova is the poster boy of sin. Sin is something that our society winks at. It is coveted, courted, longed for, idolized, applauded, and embraced. And yet in the end, it produces in its adherents the horrifying consequences of death.

We see it in our text. God's people are actively sinning against the Lord here. They had been warned of the cost that would be exacted if they continued down the path of rebellion, yet they were not detoured. Like Edmund's Turkish Delight their lust for a king left them blind to the consequences of their sin. And so we read what I consider to be one of the most frightening responses on the part of God to His people's sin.

1 Samuel 8:22, "And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city."

Allowance

With this we learn of the horrifying consequences when it comes to rebellion against God. Notice the first one: allowance.

1 Samuel 8:21-22, "And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city."

What a beautiful conjoining of the priestly and prophetic office, both of which Samuel held. As a priest, he spoke the people's words to God. As a prophet, he spoke God's word to the people. And God's word here to the people was a strong, "As you wish!" The people in rebellion wanted a king like the nations. And shockingly God would give them their heart's desire!

Now we've seen this course of action on the part of God before. Recall in the last section, "The Anatomy of Rebellion" (1 Samuel 8:1-9), that one of the ways, and in fact, I would say one of the primary ways that God deals with His people's sin in this age is by allowing them a fuller taste of it.

You say, "This doesn't sound like much of a deterrence!"

We read in Hebrews 11:25 that Moses chose not to enjoy the "passing pleasures of sin." Accordingly from this text we derive the truth that there is a deep and abiding pleasure to sin. And so the prospect of being allowed to enjoy more of our sin as a form of discipline does not sound very "Horrifying."

Yet that is only because we are considering one half of the picture! We look only at the "pleasure" which accompanies sin!

Where Dreams Come True

It reminds me of *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*¹.

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of The Dawn Treader*, Harper Trophy, Reprint 1984, ISBN 0064471071

If you've read C. S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia, you will recall the book *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader*. It details the journeys of a ship called the Dawn Treader as it travels east to Aslan's country. At one point, the Dawn Treader enters into a dark void, which is an allegory for sin.² Here, no lights could be seen, no stars, moon, sun... anything. And in this dark void of sin, they discover an Island where all dreams come true.

At first the ship-mates were thrilled. For those who always dreamt of being rich, just thinking it would make it true. For those who always longed for the return of a loved one, well... that too would become a reality if they only dreamt it. But then Lord Rhoop, who had been stranded on the Island and recently delivered, responded this way:

“Fools!... That is the sort of talk that bought me here, and I'd better have been drowned or never born. Do you hear what I say? This is where dreams- dreams, do you understand- come to life, come real. Not daydreams: dreams.”

“There was about a minute's silence and then, with a great clatter of armour the whole crew were tumbling down the main hatch as quick as they could and flinging themselves on the oars to row as they had never rowed before... For it had taken everyone just that half-minute to remember certain dreams they had had- dreams that make you afraid of going to sleep again- and to realise what it would mean to land on a country where dreams come true.”³

C. S. Lewis here beautifully depicts what it would be like to have your dreams, as it relates to sin come true. At first, in light of the pleasure of sin, the notion sounds wonderful. But like the men on the Dawn Treader, you then consider the thorns which accompany sin... and it becomes an entirely different issue.

I am often asked, “You mean to tell me that one of the ways God deals with His people's sin is by allowing them to sin? You're saying that God's means of discipline is to give the child of God

- Un-imagined pleasure?
- A greater amount of fun?
- A free-way to untold excitement?”

Again let us all be reminded that today in Christ we are shielded not only from the punishment that our sin deserves, but also, to a great degree, sin's consequences. 1 Corinthians 15 teaches us that sin brings with it a powerful sting.

1 Corinthians 15:56, “The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.”

Indeed! Sin brings forth devastation, pain, injury, and ultimately death.⁴ And yet most don't experience this sting today on account of God's grace.

2 Peter 3:7, “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

Now this “reservation for fire” pertains even to the individual.

² In the Bible, “darkness” is synonymous with sin. Compare John 1:5, 3:19; 8:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14

³ *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, pages 156-157

⁴ Compare also Romans 6:23

Romans 2:5, “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

Almost everyone who sins in this age does not reap the full consequences of their sin in their body., not yet. On account of mercy, God withholds the repercussions that we might come to the point of repentance.

Romans 2:4, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

ACCORDINGLY TODAY WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE MOST PEOPLE ENJOY THORN-FREE SINNING.

Because God loves us and does not want us to love sin, He can and does allow us to reap in our being some of the consequences of our sin. This means He will permit us to sin. And that sin will NOT be free of its consequences or thorn-free! RATHER a small portion of the hell that is sin will be experienced.

This is what is going on in our text. The people of God have cast aside God so that they might be ruled by a man. They have been warned of what life will be like if they proceed. And yet rather than turning from their horrible course, they say, “No, but there shall be a king over us” (1 Samuel 8:19b). Now, they want to live on the island which C. S. Lewis so graphically described.

The Reaping of the Harvest

But our text also shows us God’s great grace and compassion. He turns them over to their sin so that they may reap in their bodies and souls the consequence of their lust. And this brings us to the second horrifying consequence of sin the reaping.

1 Samuel 8:18, “And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.”

Now this is not to say that God would never answer His people, for He in fact did with David. But that would not be until after many years during which time Israel reaped the consequences of their sinful desires. Under Saul they would experience these things;

- Warfare became the norm, cf. 1 Samuel 14:47-48.
- Rebellion against the Lord was a common thing, 1 Samuel 13:11-14.
- Innocent and valiant men were condemned to death, 1 Samuel 14:27, 44.
- Israel's sons were expected to fight half starved, 1 Samuel 14:29.
- An evil spirit would influence the decisions of the kingdom, 1 Samuel 19:9.
- Israel's leader would have childish, peevish temper tantrums, 1 Samuel 20:30-33.
- Priests would be slain, 1 Samuel 22.
- Divination/Satan worship would be endorsed, 1 Samuel 28.
- The list goes on and on.

Indeed! God's people would reap the consequences of their sin for many years. They would spend much

of their life on the Island where dreams come true. And yet this would be the case NOT because God was angry with them and so was rubbing their nose in their folly BUT because this is the ordinary path ordained by the Lord whereby His children might learn to hate sin.

Slavery

Jeremiah 2:14-19 details the effects of the Northern exile on the Southern Kingdom of Judah. In 722 BC, the Assyrians took the northern Kingdom of Israel into exile. And yet what prompted the action, was Ahaz, the king of Judah appealing to the Assyrians for help against Israel and Syria. The result was that Judah became a vassal of Assyria.

Jeremiah 2:14, "Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled?"

A "homeborn servant" was a slave born into slavery. The significance is that though Judah was to be God's slave, nevertheless they were subject to the Assyrians for so long that all who lived at the time of Jeremiah had never known freedom; they were "homeborn" servants to the Assyrians.

Yet why were they in this condition? Why had they become prey, literally the "booty" of Assyria?

Jeremiah 2:15, "The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant."

The picture here is of a young lion standing over his prey. It is in reference to the exile of 722 BC when the Assyrians took the northern kingdom captive and reduced the Kingdom of Judah into a vassal state.

Jeremiah 2:16, "Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head."

These were prominent cities of Egypt. Assyria and Egypt were close enough allies that from 722 onward Egypt also became a thorn in the side of Judah. And yet we read on.

Jeremiah 2:17, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?"

This was a true statement! Again, it was Judah who had appealed to the Assyrians to help them against Israel in the first place. Their current slavery was of their own making!

Jeremiah 2:18, "And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?"

The connotation behind drinking was "table fellowship." Though their unholy alliance with Assyria landed them in their current mess, nevertheless God's people were endeavoring to make their life better by brokering an agreement with Assyria and Egypt. And so rather than going to God like Ahaz should have done in the first place, they here were still clinging to their independency and rebellion.

And what would be the result for this rejection of God? DON'T MISS IT!

Jeremiah 2:19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts."

I hope you see from this that God's dealing with His people is not to forsake them when they sin. Rather it is to allow their own wickedness to correct them.

From this we see the horrifying consequences of sin. When the child of God gives himself to sin such that he prefers it over Christ God does the only loving thing: He allows the Christian to be reprovved by his own wickedness.

Brothers and sisters, this is a brutal truth and yet a glorious one. God will not allow you to live in sin and remain in rebellion because His love for you is great!

Yet, you say at this point: “That's all fine, but I have a problem. It's what God says to his people in 1 Samuel 8:18.

1 Samuel 8:18 (NASB), “Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.”

“Does this mean that once God has given us to our sin that we might be reprovved by it, He never again will look kindly upon us? Is there a limit when it comes to our fellowship with Christ, a limit which once crossed will never be restored?”

Absolutely not!

First off notice what God says: When Israel would come to the point of being sickened by their sin, it would be in that day that God would not answer. This doesn't mean that Israel was doomed. BUT RATHER the moment God's people began feeling the thorn of sin, God would allow them to remain a little longer in it. That is what is being taught here.

You say, “How much longer? How long does God allow the Christian to be “reprovved by his own sin?”

How Long?

To answer this, I invite you to turn to another passage where God also gives His people over to their sin. The difference is that in this text, we learn how long God would allow his people to live on the Island where sin's dreams come true.

Isaiah 58 recounts the time in Israel where the people of God held to a form of godliness but they denied its power. They were fasting and participating in all sorts of religious activities. And yet, they were doing it so that they might earn God's favor and feel good about themselves. They did all these things while engaging in sin. Accordingly, God did not “reward” their holy activity. In fact it was just the opposite.

Isaiah 58:3, “**Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?** Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.”

This was the complaint of the people of God. They were doing all the right things; God should have been placated. Yet He wasn't. Instead His people's lives continued to be difficult and they continued to reap the thorns of sin.

Why?

Isaiah 58:3-4, “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? **Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.**”

They were fasting NOT out of love for God, BUT out of a love for themselves! Hence, they fasted and yet participated in horrible sin. And yet it wasn't all bad news. After detailing what a genuine longing for the Lord looks like (brokenness, verse 5; love, verses 6-7; holiness, verse 8), Isaiah ended with this promise...

Isaiah 58:9, “Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity.”

The genesis of the people's spiritual renewal here is verse 4, their desire to have their voice heard — their longing for fellowship with Christ.

This is an important passage as it indicates the end for which God disciplines His people. When a Christian cries out to the Lord that he might be delivered from the consequences of their sin, AND YET does not do so out of a love for Christ with a longing to be a vessel of honor; as we read in our text, “God does not hear.” Rather in love, God allows the Christian to remain in the harvest time of sin. THIS IS WHERE OUR TEXT WOULD FIND GOD'S PEOPLE FOR YEARS!

Ah, but when the rebellious Christian comes to his senses and longs for nothing less than to have his “voice heard on high” (which implies a longing for communion) and arrives at the point where what he wants is deep and abiding fellowship with Christ and so cries out to God, Isaiah says that God indeed will hear and will deliver.

That is where God is bringing us all when he allows us to go to the Island of Sin, the place of undistracted devotion to Christ.

So brothers and sisters, be encouraged! As horrifying as it may be to contemplate where unbridled sin will lead in your walks, there is a glorious hope here. When like the Prodigal we find ourselves repulsed by the food of pigs, which is the only product of sin, we are willing to serve in God's house as the lowest of the low so long as we get to fellowship with Christ. It is then that we turn from our sin unto Christ. It is then that God will by all means listen to your voice and give you the desire of your soul- The Lord Jesus Christ.

Let our conviction on that day be that as Thomas Brook's words:

“The rattle without the breast, will not satisfy the child; the house without the husband, will not satisfy the wife; the cabinet without the jewel, will not satisfy the maiden; nor will the world without Christ, satisfy the soul...”⁵

And yet as important as this truth is, I realize that it may have left some of you wondering about the grace

⁵ Thomas Brooks, Puritan Paperbacks, 1667, *Heaven on Earth* ISBN 0851513565

and kindness of God even though this course of action is how we rear our children, treat our employees, and interact with life. We allow others to bear the consequences of their sin.

I want to close with an important truth about God when He deigns to so discipline us. Listen to Psalms.

Psalms 37:23-24, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.”

What is the “fall” referenced in this text?

In light of the fact that we are talking about the child of God, we conclude that the “falling” involves their plunging into sin, for that is the only way a Christian can fall. Accordingly, though God might give us over to our rebellion that we might be taught not to sin, nevertheless Christ is ever and always there upholding us. This is what Christ Himself has promised. After He commissions His church to make disciples of all nations He closed with these words:

Matthew 28:20, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: **and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**”

Christ knew His bride wouldn't fulfill the call perfectly. In fact, He knew that various and sundry parts would run headlong into all manner of sin. But the one truth that He gave us to encourage us as we endeavor to serve Him is this: He always would be with us! Accordingly we conclude that while the sinning child of God is reaping the consequences of his sin in his body, nevertheless God is there

- Upholding him.
- Teaching him.
- Protecting him.
- Calling him.

The Thorn⁶

I stood a mendicant of God
Before His royal throne
And begged Him for one priceless gift
Which I could call my own.

I took the gift from out His hand
But as I would depart
I cried, “But, Lord, this is a thorn!
And it has pierced my heart!

This is a strange and hurtful gift
Which Thou hast given men.”
He said, “My child, I give good gifts

⁶ Martha Snell Nicholson, *Heart Held High*, Moody Press, 1955 Alibris ID 8851321639

And gave My best to thee.”

I took it home, and though at first
The cruel thorn hurt sore.
As long years passed I learned at last
To love it more and more.

I learned He never gives a thorn
Without this added grace:
He takes the thorn to pin aside
The veil which hides His face.

About Bethel Presbyterian Church

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Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10th Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on November 5, 2006. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.